

Oversight Report on Customer Service in Montana (EY 2014)

According to REG-8, to evaluate effectiveness of customer service provided by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MT DEQ), the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) is to monitor MT DEQ's responses to complaints, requests for inspections, and requests for assistance and services by permittees as well as the public or other agencies. For Evaluation Year (EY) 2014, the OSMRE also chose to evaluate the MT DEQ's customer service efforts related to the availability of documents and the responsiveness of the MT DEQ to permit applicants.

The MT DEQ provides service to all parties requesting assistance, documents or information, and regulates the coal mining industry within the State of Montana. Its services include, but are not limited to attending or making presentations at public meetings, discussions with individuals or groups regarding the Montana coal program or related regulatory, reclamation, or government activities.

In addition to the services provided to the general public, the coal program staff and management also contribute to task forces and ad-hoc committees in relation to inter- and intra-agency problem solving committees and panels. Some coal program personnel also plan and/or participate in various symposia, seminars, and workshops in relation to technical and legal aspects of coal prospecting, mining, and reclamation.

The MT DEQ takes citizen complaints seriously, and received one during the evaluation year, which pertained to blasting. Once received, the MT DEQ processed the complaint and responded to the complainant in a timely and thorough manner. The MT DEQ provided the OSMRE with documents detailing the chronology of the citizen's complaint, and based on these communications between MT DEQ and the complainant, the OSMRE has determined that the MT DEQ handles citizen complaints in an effective and professional manner and in compliance with the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM).

The MT DEQ offers and maintains two computer kiosks, one located at the MT DEQ office in Billings, MT; the other located at the MT DEQ-IEMB office in Helena, MT. These computer kiosks afford the public and other interested parties the opportunity to view information related to permits. The MT DEQ also offers and maintains an up-to-date webpage, accessed here: <http://www.deq.mt.gov/ea/coal.mcpX>, which contains pending coal permit applications and environmental assessments prepared pursuant to the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The MT DEQ also responds to permit applicants in a timely and thorough manner, and interacts well with members of the public or other agencies when assistance or services are requested.